



Senator
Ken Jacobsen

46th District Legislative Report

Spring 2006

Dear Neighbors,

Even though the legislative session that ended a day early in March was a short one, it was long on accomplishments.

We removed logjams on the civil rights bill, unemployment insurance, medical malpractice and benefits for part-time instructors at our community and technical colleges.

We wrote supplemental budgets that were prudent combinations of reserves and targeted spending.

As the chair of the Senate Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation Committee, I'm pleased to report that we passed legislation that keeps Washington a leader in the nation for environmental progress.

And we tackled a host of other issues, many of which you will find highlighted here.

Please let me know if you have any questions on the legislation we passed, or on other issues important to you.

Sincerely,

Sen. Ken Jacobsen
46th Legislative District

Keep In Touch!

Sen. Ken Jacobsen

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Committees:

- Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation (Chair)
- Transportation Committee (Vice Chair)
- Agriculture & Rural Economic Development

Contact Me

As always, feel free to contact me with your issues or concerns.

Thank you again for the privilege of representing you in the Washington State Senate.

Sensible budgets

All our accomplishments aside, the primary focus of a 60-day session is to make modest adjustments to the biennial budgets. With the good news that we had a surplus of \$1.6 billion for the biennium that ends next June, we took the responsible course of saving nearly \$950 million for the next rainy day. We put most of that in a new Pension Fund Stabilization Account, the Student Achievement Fund and the Health Services Account.

We made significant investments in our state's incomparable natural resources.

We funded toxic elimination work around the state (\$59 million), a management plan for the Columbia River Basin and reservoir construction (\$10 million), and continue cleanup activities in Hood Canal and Puget Sound (\$13 million).

We spent a sensible level — \$95 million — in education for such items as assistance in passing the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) and math remediation. With an investment of \$38 million in higher education we added 497 new enrollments, including 150 at the University of

Washington. We also funded life sciences research at UW and WSU, including start-up costs for the ground-breaking Life Sciences Discovery Fund.

Among other items we funded are the expansion of the state's Basic Health Plan to reach 6,500 low-income citizens with no health insurance and nearly 10,000 new enrollments to the Immigrants Children's Health Program.

We invested in our families and our future through these targeted investments — and still have \$227 million left over.

Highlights at a glance

After three decades of trying, we were victorious in winning **civil rights** for all our citizens. House Bill 2661 makes it illegal to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation in employment, housing, credit and insurance. Independent of statewide polls that show a majority of Washingtonians support eliminating such practices, voting for the bill — again — was the right thing to do.

Another landmark agreement was reached on the issue of **medical malpractice**. The Legislature and the governor struck a compro-

mise that improves patient safety and reforms the civil justice system. The law encourages physicians and other health-care providers to apologize for medical errors by making such statements inadmissible in civil actions if they are made within 30 days of discovery of the injury. Insurers must report certain data about medical malpractice claims to the state Office of the Insurance Commissioner. And attorneys will certify that medical malpractice claims are not frivolous.

We took strong action to protect our families and communities against **sex offenders**, passing a number of measures to increase penalties, improve tracking, promote community safety and assist victims.

We achieved a breakthrough on **unemployment insurance**. In addition to being more generous for claimants, the law will reduce taxes for businesses. In the long run, we'll stabilize rates for our state's employers and promote a well-funded trust fund.

Natural resource and environmental victories

■ **Puget Sound.** This is an irreplaceable natural and economic asset of both regional and national importance. Keeping it healthy is a top priority. Our budget included \$57 million to help protect, restore and revitalize Puget Sound through better oil-spill response, wastewater treatment, toxic site cleanup and salmon restoration. (Senate Bills 6386 and 6384)

■ **State geological survey.** With Washington ranking second in the nation for seismic danger, emergency preparedness concerns us all. The state's survey will conduct and maintain an assessment of seismic, landslide and tsunami hazards in the state. (House Bill 2384)

■ **Derelict or abandoned vessels.** Removing derelict or abandoned vessels is a matter of public safety, environmental health and aesthetics. Anyone who abandons a vessel will now be held accountable. We also created a better procedure to appeal state or local removal orders. (Senate Bill 6223)

■ **Commercial harvest of geoducks.** Geoducks are much prized by commercial harvesters and are a significant export product. We allowed state-authorized harvests within 200 yards of shore, subject to the current depth limit. I was the prime sponsor of the Senate companion bill. (House Bill 2386)

■ **Coastal crab fisheries licenses.** Protecting the coastal crab industry is important to those who make their living this way and to the environment. In this bill I sponsored, we limited how often a crabber can increase the size of the vessel for licensing purposes to reduce some of the pressure on this resource. (Senate Bill 6439)

■ **Nontoxic shot.** Discharged lead-based shot used by hunters threatens our waterfowl, especially majestic trumpeter swans. Those 16 or older convicted of the unlawful hunting of birds using toxic shot are subject to additional penalties, including revocation of hunting privileges and a \$1,000 fine. (House Bill 2958)

■ **Surface mining.** The impacts of sand and gravel pits were addressed by the Surface Mining Act in 1970. To maintain an effective permitting and oversight program, we increased fees and improved bonding and security procedures. (Senate Bill 6175)

■ **Recreational boating activities.** "Teak surfing," or hanging onto a boat's swim platform while the motor is running, has resulted in injuries and death. Vessel operators may be fined up to \$100 for operating a boat while someone is teak surfing, bodysurfing or holding onto the swim deck. (Senate Bill 6364)

■ **Columbia River water management.** After 25 years, Democrats and Republicans finally agreed to a landmark bill that will increase water storage with the construction of new reservoirs. Two-thirds of the water will be for users, such as farmers and cities, and one-third will be returned to the river for fish. (House Bill 2860)

■ **Renewable fuels.** To help ensure farmers a market for biofuels, we developed minimum renewable fuel content requirements and fuel quality standards in the alternative fuels market. The bill requires that by the end of 2008, all automotive fuels sold in Washington contain at least 2 percent biofuels: either biodiesel — a fuel made from vegetable oil — or, in the case of gasoline, denatured ethanol. (Senate Bill 6508)

■ **Energy Freedom Fund.** To help farmers produce biofuels, we created the Energy Freedom Fund within the Department of Agriculture. The program will provide low-cost financing for the creation of renewable fuels. Eligible projects include the construction of facilities to convert farm products or waste into electricity or gas and liquid fuels. (House Bill 2939)

■ **“E-waste.”** Improperly disposed e-waste can release dangerous heavy metals into the environment. A bill that I helped sponsor calls for electronic manufacturers of TVs, computers and monitors to set up collection and recycling programs for unwanted items in each county in Washington. (Senate Bill 6428)

■ **Oil spill prevention.** To make sure our waterways remain as pristine as possible, we required the Department of Ecology to evaluate the adequacy of oil spill contingency plans and conduct random oil spill practice drills. (Senate Bill 6244)

■ **Sewage disposal.** In response to concerns about failing on-site sewage systems near marine waters, we asked local health officers in 12 counties

bordering Puget Sound to develop and approve on-site program management plans. The budget includes \$1.5 million for on-site sewage replacement. (House Bill 1458)

■ **State park fees.** Although I remain deeply concerned that we continue to underfund our public parks, we repealed the \$5 daily parking fee. (House Bill 2416)

Veterans issues

■ **Tuition and fee waivers.** We directed state institutions of higher education to do more outreach and increase the number of veterans who receive tuition waivers. Public colleges and universities will make admissions applications easier for veterans who need assistance, and will help them access any GI Bill funding for which they may also be eligible. (House Bill 2233)

■ **Veterans Innovations Program.** We established the Veterans Innovations Program (VIP) to provide additional assistance to veterans who have returned to their families and communities after serv-

ing in recent military action. The program includes crisis and emergency relief, education, training and employment assistance, as well as one-time financial hardship grants of up to \$500 for employment, education, housing and health care. It gives priority to returning vets from Iraq and Afghanistan in the state’s Basic Health Plan. (House Bill 2754)

■ **Home down-payment assistance.** We created a down-payment assistance program to help veterans in purchasing a home. Those eligible are Washington veterans; members and former members of the Washington National Guard and

Reserve; and widows and dependent children of deceased, eligible veterans. (House Bill 2471)

■ **Property tax deferrals for disabled vets.** Senior citizens and veterans who are retired because of a physical disability are currently allowed to defer payment of their property taxes on their personal residence if their disposable income is \$40,000 or less. We increased from one acre to five the size of property on which they can defer tax payments. (Senate Bill 6338)

Other key bills

■ I introduced the **Legislative Youth Advisory Council** bill last session to give our young people a voice in issues that matter to them and to prepare them to successfully engage in civic life. That law had an expiration date of June 30, 2007, but after seeing how successful the council was in representing our youth, I sponsored another bill this session to remove the expiration date and lower the age of membership on the council from 14 to 12. Although the bill passed the Senate, it did not clear the House. Next session, I plan to re-introduce it. (Senate Bill 6536)

■ It’s matter of both equity and respect that part-time faculty at our public community and technical colleges earn benefits proportional to those earned by their full-time colleagues. We standardize how much **sick leave** may be accrued and whether leave may be used when part-time faculty members transfer among public institutions. I co-sponsored this measure. (Senate Bill 6396)

■ Our public transportation projects keep Washington’s economy moving. We expanded our work force by putting more apprentices to work through a law that requires the state Department of Transportation to phase in their use over three years. (Senate Bill 6480)

■ **Licensed family home providers** are responsible for delivering a critically important service, caring for about 25 percent of the children in state-subsidized care. They will be able to bargain collectively for such items as pay, health and welfare benefits, professional development and training, and grievance procedures. (House Bill 2353).

■ We created the **Department of Early Learning** at the Cabinet level to consolidate the state’s programs and give parents better information about child care and preschool programs. (Senate Bill 6466)

■ Previously in-state wineries, breweries and micro-breweries could distribute their products by using a distributor,

delivering the product directly to the retailer, or having the retailer arrange for a pick-up of the product from the manufacturer. But out-of-state producers couldn’t use these three avenues. A court ruling that our law requiring distributors for out-of-state producers is a violation of the U.S. Constitution’s Commerce Clause prompted legislation. Now the **“Costco bill”** gives out-of-state operations the same three ways to get their products to retailers that domestic producers have. (Senate Bill 6823)

■ Various exemptions exist to the general rule that all public records are available for public inspection and copying. To protect **Native American cultural resources** and sites from predation, I sponsored legislation that allows such information acquired during watershed analyses to also be exempt from public disclosure. The bill went to the governor’s desk without a single dissenting vote. (Senate Bill 6429)

Ocean Policy Review Task Force: update

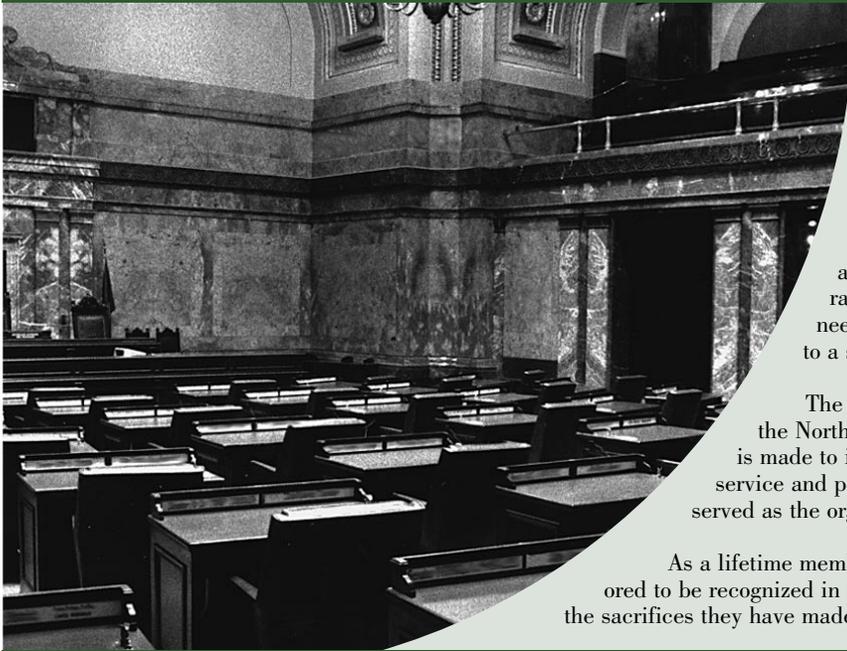
We have two ocean fronts in our state – the Pacific and Puget Sound – and their health is important to our environment and our economy. It’s why I introduced legislation last year (Senate Bill 5278) which led to the creation of a task force to direct our efforts to preserve

and promote our coastal and ocean resources.

With membership from the governor’s office, Department of Fish and Wildlife, Commissioner of Public Lands, legislators, local governments and citizen appointments, this group is uniquely positioned to offer lead-

ership and perspective. And it has been busy. Its work is slated to conclude next January. Look for the group’s recommendations on my Web page at <http://www.sdc.wa.gov/jacobsen.htm>.

Awards



Sponsoring and supporting legislation for our veterans and their families is one of the most satisfying facets of my work in Olympia. Seeing this legislation signed into law is the reward.

But I have been humbled to be the recipient of two awards for this work.

The **Declaration of Achievement** was awarded by the Washington Department of Veteran Affairs in acknowledgment of having “acted to ease the emotional ravages of war through mindful attention to the special needs of the veterans of the state of Washington,” according to a statement released by John Lee, department director.

The **Glenn Galbreath Spirit Award** was presented by the Northwest Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America. It is made to individuals who exemplify the high standards of public service and personal commitment demonstrated by Galbreath, who served as the organization’s legislative director.

As a lifetime member of the Disabled American Veterans, I’m truly honored to be recognized in these ways. We owe our veterans tremendous respect for the sacrifices they have made.

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Sen. Ken Jacobsen



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